The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended): A method for removing an edge region of a layer applied to a substrate for use in a microlithographic process, ~~in which~~ said method comprising [[,]] imaging a laser beam ~~is imaged~~ onto the edge region a layer applied to a substrate, and removing said ~~wherein the laser beam removes the~~ edge region by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

2. (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam is focused in the form of a point ~~or a line~~ onto the edge region by means of an imaging means.

3. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam is imaged onto the edge region in such a manner that the laser beam is incident on the surface of the substrate in an essentially perpendicular direction.

4. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam is imaged onto the edge region in such a manner that the laser beam is incident on a plane spanned by the substrate surface in an essentially parallel direction, wherein the laser beam is incident on an edge of the substrate in a tangential direction.

5. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein evaporated fragments and particles of the edge region are removed by a vacuum device or a blower device, which is arranged in the proximity of the edge region.

6. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the substrate is essentially circular and the layer comprises a coating of a photoresist.

7. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam and the

substrate are moved relative to one another, while the laser beam scans the edge region in order to remove the latter.

8. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the edge region removed by the laser beam or a test field coated in an essentially identical manner to the edge region, is optically scanned, in order to adapt or regulate a parameter of the laser beam in such a manner that the edge region or the test field is essentially removed in its entirety.

9. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein an aperture means prevents the laser beam from being imaged onto regions of the substrate other than the edge region, which is to be removed.

10. (Currently Amended): A method for coating a substrate with a layer~~, in particular, with a photoresist layer~~, for use in a microlithographic process, ~~in which~~ said method comprising [[,]] applying a layer onto a ~~is applied to the~~ substrate, and removing an edge region of the applied layer ~~is removed~~ by imaging a laser beam onto the edge region, so that the laser beam removes the edge region by evaporation.

11. (Currently Amended): An apparatus for removing an edge region of a layer applied to a substrate, for use in a microlithographic process, said apparatus comprising a laser light source for emitting a laser beam, and imaging means for imaging the laser beam onto the edge region of the substrate, wherein the laser light source is adapted for removing the edge region by evaporation by means of the laser beam ~~by evaporation~~.

12. (Currently Amended): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to focus the laser beam onto the edge region in the form of a point ~~or line~~.

13. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to image the laser beam onto the edge region in such a manner, that the laser beam is incident on the surface of the substrate in an essentially perpendicular direction.

14. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to image the laser beam onto the edge region in such a manner, that the laser beam is incident on a plane spanned by the surface of the substrate in an essentially parallel direction, wherein the laser beam is incident on an edge of the substrate in a tangential direction.

15. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein a vacuum device or a blower device is arranged in the proximity of the edge region, in order to remove evaporated fragments and particles of the layer from the edge region by vacuum or blowing.

16. (Currently Amended): The apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a holding means for holding a substrate, wherein said substrate ~~which~~ is essentially circular, ~~and~~ onto which a photoresist layer has been applied by means of spin coating.

17. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, which is configured in such a manner that the laser beam and the substrate are moved relative to one another, while the laser beam scans the edge region in order to remove the latter.

18. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising an optical scanning device for scanning optically either the edge region removed by the laser beam or a test field, which is coated in a manner essentially identical to the edge region, in order, in this manner, to adapt or regulate a parameter of the laser beam, in such a manner that the edge region or the test field is removed essentially in its entirety.

19. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising an aperture means to prevent the laser beam from being imaged onto regions of the substrate other than the edge region, which is to be removed.

20. (Original): An apparatus for coating a substrate with a layer for use in a microlithographic process, comprising: a coating device for applying the layer to the substrate; a laser light source for emitting a laser beam; and an imaging means for imaging

the laser beam onto the edge region of the substrate, wherein the laser light source is adapted for removing of the edge region with the laser beam by evaporation.

21. (Original): A substrate, which is coated with a layer for use in a microlithographic process, wherein an edge region of the layer is removed by imaging a laser beam onto the edge region for removing the edge region by evaporation.

22. (Original): The substrate according to claim 21, wherein the layer comprises a hardly soluble photoresist.

23. (Original): The substrate according to claim 22, wherein the edge region is removed essentially evenly, a front face of the edge region being essentially free from the layer to be removed.

24. (New): The method according to claim 1, wherein said laser beam is focused in the form of a line onto said edge region by means of an imaging means.

25. (New): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to focus the laser beam onto the edge region in the form of a line.

26. (New): The method according to claim 1, wherein said laser beam is focused onto said edge region by means of an imaging means comprising a lens, a mirror, or a diffractive optical element.

27. (New): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said imaging means comprises a lens, a mirror, or a diffractive optical element.

28. (New): The method according to claim 24, wherein said imaging means comprises a cylindrical lens or an elongated hollow mirror.

29. (New): The method according to claim 1, wherein the power of said laser is 50W-100W.